

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election illustrates the manipulation of the air waves that mitigates a free and independent media environment in a democracy.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. However, when large companies control the airwaves, lack of meaningful public discourse occurs and the production of local programming barely exists. Therefore, people do not have a chance to explore the problems and successes within their own communities and regions. Furthermore, the very real danger of generating "groupthink" emerges.

Sinclair's pressure on its affiliates to air biased material shows why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, that require diversification, rather than weaken them. It's time for public policy to evolve and return control of the air waves to local communities rather than large conglomerates.